



# ***COCONINO COUNTY***

## ***DUI/DRUG COURT EVALUATION***

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## **A. REPORT OVERVIEW**

The Coconino County DUI/Drug Court was established in 2001 with support from the federal government and the state of Arizona. The DUI/Drug Court team approached Northern Arizona University's Social Research Laboratory (SRL) to conduct an evaluation of the program. Dr. Frederic Solop, director of the Social Research Laboratory, served as principal investigator for this research. Dr. Nancy A. Wonders, professor of criminal justice at Northern Arizona University, served as consultant to this research; Kristi K. Hagen served as co-principal investigator; and, Kelly McCarrier, served as project manager for the evaluation. The research team designed an outcomes and process evaluation for the Coconino County DUI/Drug Court program. This report is the product of two years of evaluation research conducted by the SRL research team.

This evaluation report contains many sections. An executive summary of major findings is presented in Section B. Section C presents an overview of the mission of the Coconino County DUI/Drug Court program and outlines program components. Section D outlines the research design and methodology employed in this evaluation, including data collection and data management procedures. Section E presents findings from the outcomes evaluation. This section examines the randomization process whereby offenders were assigned either to the DUI/Drug Court program or the control group which was processed through the traditional criminal justice system. It also profiles DUI/Drug Court participants and compares the outcomes associated with participation in DUI/Drug Court with participation in the traditional criminal justice process, including a comparison of the costs associated with each program. Process evaluation findings are presented in Section F. These findings result from focus group research and exit interviews conducted with individuals leaving Coconino County's DUI/Drug Court program. Study limitations are presented in Section G. Section H presents a detailed analysis of key findings from this evaluation in light of past research on drug courts. It also describes several implications of this research for the future.

## **B. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1) Northern Arizona University's Social Research Laboratory, working with Dr. Nancy A. Wonders, Northern Arizona University Professor of Criminal Justice, conducted a two year outcomes and process evaluation of Coconino County's DUI/Drug Court program. The evaluation involved random assignment of eligible offenders to an experimental group that entered into the County's DUI/Drug Court program and to a control group that was processed through the traditional criminal justice system. Outcomes data for members of the two groups were collected from May 1, 2001 to October 31, 2002 and analyzed. Process information, including exit interview and focus group findings, was collected and integrated into the evaluation.
- 2) The experimental and control groups were similarly constituted, according to an analysis of group demographics including sex, age, marital status, employment status, educational status, physical health at intake, and self-rated quality of life. Thirty percent of eligible participants randomized into the experimental group elected to not participate in the DUI/Drug Court program. An analysis of this group shows few differences with experimental group members electing to stay in the DUI/Drug Court program.
- 3) Ninety-one percent of people participating in the DUI/Drug Court program were assessed to be drug dependent, rather than drug abusing. Alcohol was the primary drug of choice for two-thirds of this group. Sixty percent of program participants had a history of prior involvement with treatment and education programs. Virtually everyone involved in the program had prior convictions, including felony convictions. One-third of prior convictions for DUI/Drug Court participants were for drug-related offenses. Two-thirds of people participating in the DUI/Drug Court program were most recently convicted of both felony and misdemeanor offenses. Fifty-four percent received jail time for their offense(s). Nearly everyone was required to pay a probation service fee, in addition to other fees. Average fines and fees totaled \$847 per person. Eighty percent of DUI/Drug Court participants in this study either graduated from the program or were actively involved in the program at the end of the evaluation study period.
- 4) DUI/Drug Court offers a significant alternative to the traditional criminal justice approach for handling alcohol and drug-using offenders. Coconino County DUI/Drug Court differed from the traditional criminal justice process in several ways. Participants in the DUI/Drug Court program generally had more contact with criminal justice personnel in an average month than offenders processed through the traditional criminal justice system. They also participated in more treatment programs each month. In exit interviews, people spoke very highly of the DUI/Drug Court program structure, specifically of the value of regular urinary analyses and contacts with the presiding judge. Interactions with members of the DUI/Drug Court team were consistently reported as positive and helpful for

maintaining sobriety. For many, the participant network became a support group for participants to rely on for assistance. While appearances before the judge are anxiety provoking, they help to keep clients focused on recovery.

- 5) For alcohol and drug-using offenders, DUI/Drug Court is more effective at reducing alcohol and drug use than the traditional criminal justice process. In an average month, DUI/Drug Court participants take six times the number of urinary analysis (UA) tests than do control group members in the traditional criminal justice system. Yet, 95 percent of participant drug tests are negative compared to 79 percent of control group drug tests.
- 6) For alcohol and drug using offenders, DUI/Drug Court is more effective at reducing criminal offending than the traditional criminal justice process. Three times as many additional offenses are committed each month by control group members than by DUI/Drug Court participants.
- 7) DUI/Drug Court is more cost effective than the traditional criminal justice process. Recognizing that many costs and benefits are difficult to quantify, an accounting of known costs suggests that the average DUI/Drug Court participant costs Coconino County approximately \$6,408 compared with a cost of \$22,740 for drug offenders proceeding through the traditional criminal justice system. In addition, DUI/Drug Court participants make more positive contributions to society during an average month, working more hours each week and spending more time in school than people processed through the traditional criminal justice system.

## **C. COCONINO COUNTY DUI/DRUG COURT**

This section of the report outlines the mission of the Coconino County DUI/Drug Court and defines the process clients experience when participating in the DUI/Drug Court program. The broad goals of the evaluation study reported in the following pages are also introduced in this section.

### **1. Mission**

The Coconino County DUI/Drug Court mission is “To enhance county-wide community health, welfare, and safety through reducing substance abuse offenses by requiring system and offender accountability within a comprehensive continuum of intervention options and court ordered immediate consequences for non-compliance” (Coconino County DUI/Drug Court Program Brochure, 2003). The program is a “court-supervised, comprehensive treatment program for nonviolent offenders” (Coconino County DUI/Drug Court Program Brochure, 2003).

### **2. Process**

After arrest, pre-trial services completes an initial eligibility screening to determine if clients meet requirements to enter into the DUI/Drug Court program. Typically, clients meet eligibility if their offenses are drug or alcohol related and they have no prior violent offenses. If clients meet eligibility, they undergo an intake assessment by the Drug Court Coordinator to determine the extent of their substance abuse problem; clinical diagnosis is made according to the American Psychiatric Association’s DSM-IV diagnostic criteria. When this assessment indicates alcohol or drug abuse or dependency, treatment recommendations are made and the person is considered for the DUI/Drug Court program.

According to the DUI/Drug Court program guidelines, if an individual is accepted into the program, the DUI/Drug Court team continues to assist the participant throughout their time in the program. Successful completion and graduation from the program may result in early termination of probation and dismissal of charges. If the DUI/Drug Court client fails to complete the program, the client’s stipulated sentence will be enforced. Client progress is overseen by the DUI/Drug Court Judge who has full jurisdiction of the entire process (Coconino County DUI/Drug Court Program Brochure, 2003).

As with many DUI/Drug Court programs, the Coconino County DUI/Drug Court program consists of four treatment phases: Phase I (stabilization, orientation, and assessment), Phase II (intensive treatment and assessment), Phase III (phased treatment and assessment), and Phase IV (continued recovery and assessment). Each phase requires clients to attend DUI/Drug Court, probation contacts, and intensive outpatient treatment. Clients are required to participate in random drug tests. They must also perform community service if not employed. In 2002, the program began to require

support group participation for all clients. The frequency of support group participation varies by phase, but is now required throughout the program in an attempt to help clients further develop social support for a sober lifestyle (Coconino County DUI/Drug Court Program Brochure, 2003). Depending on the specific needs of a client, other requirements may be assigned as part of their individualized treatment plan. Requirements decrease as clients advance through program phases. To advance to the next phase, clients must complete all requirements, counselors must recommend advancement, and the DUI/Drug Court team, including the presiding judge, must agree such action is appropriate. To graduate from the program, participants must complete all program phases. Graduation also requires that all treatment goals be accomplished, program fees paid, participants must be drug free for a minimum of six months, and approval must be received from the presiding judge. The program is designed to last a minimum of ten months, but program duration varies depending on how quickly clients complete each phase.

### **3. Evaluation Component**

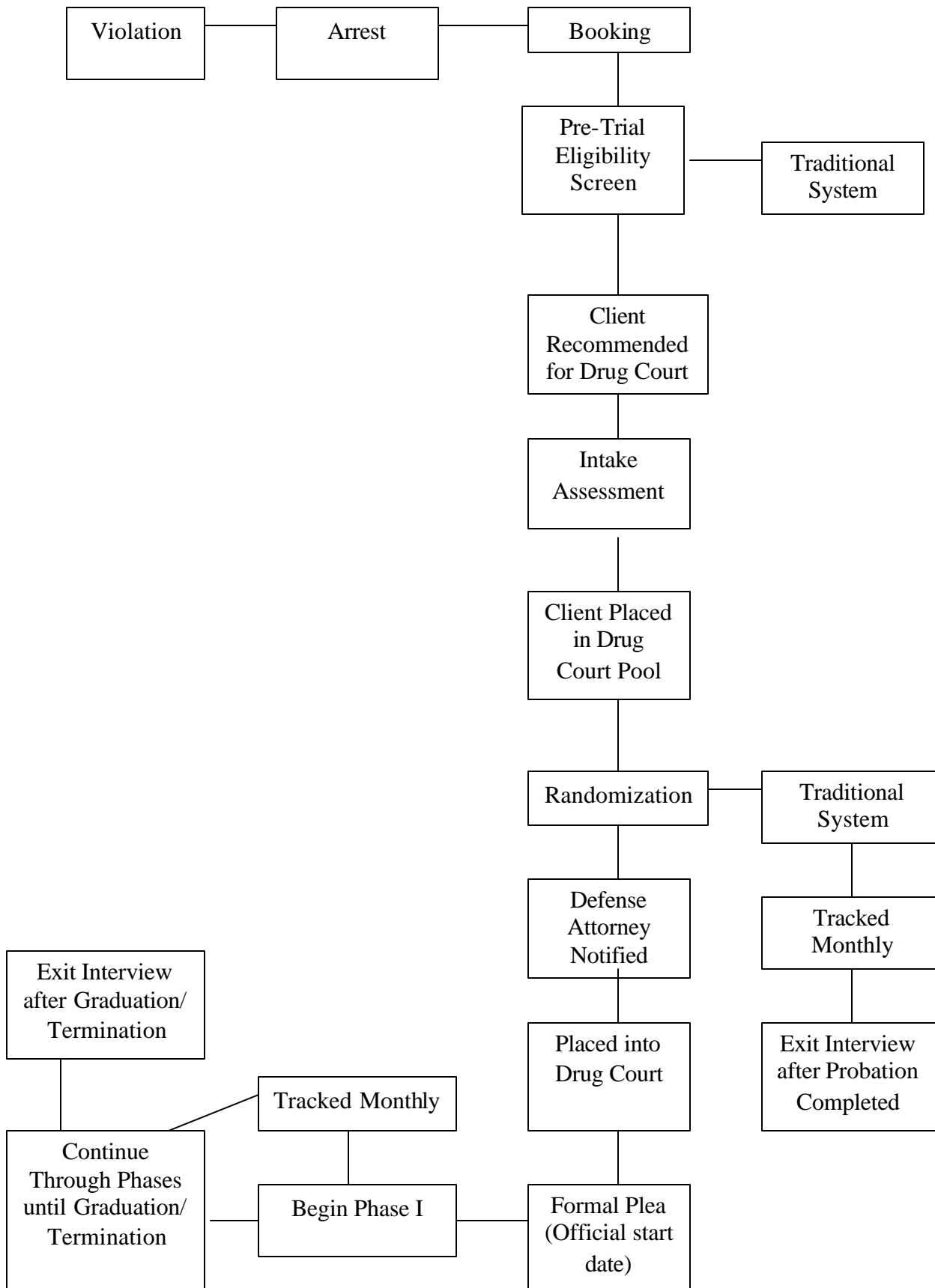
Coconino County's DUI/Drug Court is funded by a federal grant from the Office of Justice Programs, Drug Courts Program Office and through funds from Fill-The-Gap Arizona State Aid to the Courts. This grant allowed for the program to be established in Coconino County. It also required that an evaluation of the program be completed. The Coconino County DUI/Drug Court contracted with NAU's Social Research Laboratory (SRL) to conduct this evaluation.

While the Coconino County DUI/Drug Court program began accepting clients in February, 2001, the program evaluation data collection period formally began in May, 2001. At this time, the DUI/Drug Court began a controlled experiment under the supervision and guidance of the SRL. Once the DUI/Drug Court Intake Coordinator determined that a client's treatment needs could be met through participation in the DUI/Drug Court program, the client was randomly assigned either to the DUI/Drug Court treatment group or the control group (traditional court system). Since DUI/Drug Court is an optional program, clients were allowed to decline participation into the program and enter into the traditional system. Clients randomized into DUI/Drug Court and accepting the terms of the program entered into a plea agreement for a stipulated sentence and began participating in the program. Upon graduation from DUI/Drug Court, a client's original charges are dismissed. Clients leaving the program or terminated from the program face reinstatement of their original charges.

Once data collection for the SRL evaluation process was completed (October 31, 2002), randomization of potential clients ceased and all eligible DUI/Drug Court clients had the option of participating in DUI/Drug Court if a plea was offered.

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#### 4. Coconino County DUI/Drug Court Flow Chart





## **D. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

This section outlines the evaluation methodology used in the study conducted by the Social Research Laboratory. First, a distinction is made between an outcomes evaluation and a process evaluation; both strategies were employed in this project. Next, the study design is described, followed by a description of the data collection format. Finally, some key data management issues are addressed.

### **1. Outcomes Evaluation and Process Evaluation Goals**

Evaluation research attempts to ascertain the impacts an action or treatment has on society or an individual. It is also used to measure the impact of government policy or other social interventions (Schutt, 1999).

Evaluation research focusing primarily on the effectiveness of particular intervention programs is also known as *outcomes evaluation* (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003). This study was designed to provide an outcomes evaluation of the Coconino County DUI/Drug Court. More specifically, this evaluation analyzes outcomes or consequences of the DUI/Drug Court program for participants. This is accomplished by profiling characteristics of participants in the program. Additional outcomes information is provided by comparing offenders participating in the program with offenders processed through the traditional criminal justice process. Here, the study explores whether those who participated in the DUI/Drug Court had different experiences, levels of treatment, recidivism, and/or drug use than those processed via the traditional criminal justice system. The study also investigates the differing costs associated with each strategy for handling drug and alcohol using offenders.

Another kind of evaluation research is *process evaluation* (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003); here the focus is on assessing the meaning and effect of the DUI/Drug Court program on participants. In this study, a qualitative approach based in focus group methodology and exit interviews with program participants was used to assess the meaning and effect of the DUI/Drug Court on participants, from their point of view. This strategy provides useful information regarding ways the program might be changed to enhance program effectiveness. It also helps to identify specific strengths of the program. Ultimately, evaluation research allows those making funding decisions to understand if programs are effective and worthy of continued funding or additional funding.

### **2. Study Design**

The Coconino County DUI/Drug Court contracted with the Social Research Laboratory (SRL) at Northern Arizona University and Dr. Nancy Wonders, of Northern Arizona University's Department of Criminal Justice, to design and implement an evaluation of the newly developed DUI/Drug Court program. The research design developed by the

SRL research team relied heavily on recommendations made by the U.S. Department of Justice in two important reports: *Defining Drug Courts: The Key Components* (1997a) and *Drug Court Monitoring, Evaluation, and Management Information Systems* (1998a). It was designed to accomplish two types of evaluation research: an outcomes evaluation and a process evaluation. The outcomes evaluation consists primarily of a controlled experiment wherein offenders were randomly assigned to one of two groups. Individuals in the experimental group were placed into the DUI/Drug Court program and those in the control group were processed through the traditional criminal justice system. In this report, experimental group data is compared to control group data in order to analyze the impact of Coconino County's DUI/Drug Court program. The initial evaluation design called for analysis based on a minimum of 100 Drug Court program participants and 100 control group members. However, the total number of participants fell short of this goal during the period of the study.

To accomplish the research goals, a series of steps were taken beginning in 2000. In December, the DUI/Drug Court team and the SRL research team met to discuss implementation of DUI/Drug Court in Coconino County. At that time, the SRL research team began developing an evaluation proposal that involved development of the research instruments and the reporting of results after six months of DUI/Drug Court activity. This evaluation proposal was submitted to the DUI/Drug Court team in January 2001.

Following adoption of the research proposal, the SRL research team developed a list of variables to be measured in the evaluation process. In subsequent meetings, the SRL research team and the DUI/Drug Court team prepared, pre-tested, and implemented the research instruments and protocol. A six month report of data collection efforts was provided to the DUI/Drug Court team. A second phase of the evaluation process continued data collection for another year, funded additional data collection through exit interviews and a focus group, and supported completion of a final evaluation report.

### **3. Data Collection and Group Randomization**

The research instruments are composed of five scantron forms (see Appendix A). The scantron process began with the *intake assessment* form, which was completed by the DUI/Drug Court Coordinator when interviewing potential DUI/Drug Court candidates. This form captures client demographics, history of substance abuse, treatment history, and DUI/Drug Court eligibility. The *criminal history* form, completed by an Adult Probation Officer, recorded prior conviction dates and types of convictions. The *current offense* form, completed by the DUI/Drug Court Administrative Specialist and an Adult Probation Officer, gathered information pertaining to the offense or offenses that led clients to DUI/Drug Court. A *monthly progress* form tracked each client's monthly progress in DUI/Drug Court or the traditional criminal justice system and was completed by a DUI/Drug Court Administrative Specialist and an Adult Probation Officer. This form primarily included information about the phase a client was in for a given month, additional sanctions a client may have received, the amount of money paid to court, and

the number of days at risk. The last form was an *exit interview* form, which evaluated client progress, changing demographics, and information regarding substance use/abuse during the evaluation.

From an evaluation perspective, the first clients entering in to the DUI/Drug Court program in February 2001 were pre-test subjects. During this time, the research instruments and variables were refined for effectiveness and accuracy. The SRL research team developed a codebook containing form use instructions and created an SPSS database for later analysis.

In May 2001 the research team began implementing the randomization process to determine which clients would enter DUI/Drug Court and which clients would remain in the traditional criminal justice system. Essentially, clients who had been deemed DUI/Drug Court eligible on the basis of an intake assessment were randomly assigned to DUI/Drug Court or the control group: offenders in the control group were processed through the traditional criminal justice system. In order to ensure that enough offenders were assigned to the experimental group, clients deemed eligible for DUI/Drug Court were randomized into the program at a rate of two offenders assigned to DUI/Drug Court for every one assigned to the control group.<sup>1</sup> Once the randomization process was in place, evaluation data collection was initiated.

During the next four months, several meetings were held to discuss the DUI/Drug Court process, instrument forms, form use instructions and questions, and randomization issues. In September 2001, a meeting was held to discuss attorney-initiated referrals to the DUI/Drug Court program. It was decided that a separate randomization process for attorney-initiated referrals would be implemented immediately. The randomization process followed the same guidelines as the initial randomization process. Attorney-initiated referrals qualifying for the program were randomized separately to create the same likelihood of entering DUI/Drug Court as those referred by pretrial services.

An initial six-month evaluation of the Coconino County DUI/Drug Court program was completed in March 2002. At that time, very little data was available and only a small number of clients had participated in the evaluation. Upon further review, the Coconino County DUI/Drug Court advisory board decided to expand the evaluation period to cover a one and one-half year time period. The DUI/Drug Court staff continued to collect and provide data to the SRL research team. This final evaluation report is based on 18 months of data beginning May 1, 2001 and ending October 31, 2002. The randomization process was in place throughout this entire period of time.

At the end of the 18-month data collection process, information was available for 124 participants: 82 participants randomized into DUI/Drug Court and 42 randomized into the control group. The final assignment of offenders, after client acceptance or rejection of the DUI/Drug Court option, resulted in 57 DUI/Drug Court participants, 25 people randomized into DUI/Drug Court but not electing to participate, and 42 control group

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<sup>1</sup> Assignment of people to the experimental group at a rate of 2:1 was also employed in the Baltimore, Maryland Drug Court program.

members. The final outcomes evaluation is based on comparisons of the experiences of the 57 DUI/Drug Court participants and the 42 control group members.

Exit interviews were designed to gather data from program participants upon exit from the program, either through graduation or termination. The exit interviews provide quantitative and qualitative measures of clients' experience in DUI/Drug Court. After exiting from the program, the SRL attempted to establish an appointment to complete an exit interview. Interviews took place in different locations; if the client was a DUI/Drug Court graduate, generally the interview took place immediately after their court graduation ceremony in a room provided by DUI/Drug Court staff. Some graduate interviews took place at local cafes or other public locations. If the client was terminated from the DUI/Drug Court program, the interview took place at the Coconino County Jail. No exit interviews were completed with control group clients.

Focus groups offer researchers an opportunity to obtain detailed information on specific topics using a focused discussion format. The discussion atmosphere enables researchers to probe the complexity of peoples' thought processes and elicit depth and detail involving a particular subject matter. Focus groups generally involve a small number of participants; therefore, it is difficult to assess the degree to which expressed sentiments are representative of broader populations. Nonetheless, focus groups provide valuable information on an explanatory level and give shape and direction to the research process. A focus group was held with eight DUI/Drug Court participants on January 9, 2003, from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm at Coconino County Health Department. Attempts were made to include program graduates, but none attended. All participants were given dinner and beverages as well as a \$25 honorarium for their involvement. Participants were assured that their participation would remain anonymous.

#### **4. Data Management**

During the evaluation period, the SRL exported a total of 1033 completed scantron forms into SPSS files: 124 intake forms, including 82 DUI/Drug Court and 42 control clients; a total of 106 criminal history forms, including 71 DUI/Drug Court and 35 control clients; a total of 100 current offense forms from 69 DUI/Drug Court and 31 control clients; a total of 693 monthly forms, including 507 DUI/Drug Court and 186 control clients; and lastly, 10 exit interview forms, all from DUI/Drug Court clients.

These files have been merged to form the database used for analysis. Reported totals may not equal 100 percent due to rounding or because multiple response questions allow more than one answer per respondent. Additionally, three types of missing data occur in this study: 1) some clients beginning the study dropped out of either DUI/Drug Court or the control group; 2) data was not gathered on all variables for all individuals; and, 3) information was not available for different types of clients on all variables.

The next section presents findings from the outcomes evaluation research. This is followed by findings from the process evaluation component of this research project.

## **E. OUTCOMES EVALUATION: FINDINGS**

This section describes findings from the outcomes evaluation. First, it explores the integrity of the randomization process. The goal of this portion of the report is to assess whether the study yielded experimental and control groups with enough similarities to allow for valid comparisons. Additionally, offenders who elected to not participate in the DUI/Drug Court program are compared to those who elected to participate to examine whether significant differences exist between these groups. This section also profiles DUI/Drug Court participants, describing salient characteristics of this group and program retention rates. This portion of the report also provides a detailed comparison of outcomes for those in the DUI/Drug Court and those processed through the traditional criminal justice system; a variety of outcomes are explored, including contact with the criminal justice system, drug use, and recidivism. Differences in program costs are also explored.

### **1. Randomization: Comparison of Experimental and Control Groups**

One hundred and twenty-four people were included in this study. Offenders were randomly assigned to two groups: an ‘experimental group’ that was offered the option of entering DUI/Drug Court and a ‘control group’ that was handled through the traditional court system. Of the 124 people included within this study, 82 (66%) were randomized into the experimental group and 42 (34%) were randomized into the control group. Nearly one-third (30%) of people originally assigned to the experimental DUI/Drug Court group elected to not participate in the DUI/Drug Court program. They accepted processing within the traditional criminal justice system for their offenses, typically resulting in probation or incarceration. Final comparisons of outcomes are made for the 57 people staying in the experimental group and the 42 people in the control group.

Table 1 compares the background characteristics of people randomly assigned to the DUI/Drug Court experimental group with those in the control group. The experimental methodology utilized in this evaluation is considered valid if these groups are similarly constituted. According to Table 1, the DUI/Drug Court and control groups are similarly constituted. Approximately 85 percent of DUI/Drug Court and control group members are male. People in both groups were, on average, in their late twenties at intake. Most clients in both groups were unmarried. Seventy percent were employed full-time when randomized into either the experimental or control groups. Educational rates were similar across the two groups, with approximately 60 percent of the experimental and control groups having no more than a high school education. Three-quarters of people in both groups rated their physical health as “average” at intake and both groups of offenders gave similar average ratings to their quality of life.

There are slight differences between the experimental and control groups. Although the groups have similar ethnic and racial compositions, there are differences. A majority of members of both groups are white: 54 percent of DUI/Drug Court members are white and 67 percent of control group members are white. The largest racial minority in both

groups is Native American. Forty-three percent of the DUI/Drug Court group is Native American and one-third (33%) of the control group is Native American. A slightly higher proportion of Hispanics were randomly assigned to the control group: 26 percent versus 16 percent of the experimental group. There is another slight difference in the proportion of people who are parents. While 51 percent of people in the experimental group have dependent children less than 18 years of age, 40 percent of the control group has dependent children. Ten percent of people randomized into DUI/Drug Court were receiving public assistance at intake, compared with 17 percent of people assigned to the control group. Sixty-five percent of people in the experimental group have a history of participating in education and/or treatment programs for their drug habits, while 72 percent of people in the control group have a similar history.

The experimental and control groups are more similar than different. Where differences occur, the degree of difference ranges from seven to 13 percent. A difference of 13 percent translates, in some circumstances, to four people. Given the relatively small number of people in each group, these differences do not threaten the validity of the experimental methodology utilized in this research. The process of randomly assigning people to an experimental and control group worked and evaluation findings are valid.

**Table 1: Demographics of DUI/Drug Court and Control Group Clients**

Attribute	Outcome of Randomization Process	
	DUI/Drug Court (n=82)	Control (n=42)
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	83%	86%
Female	17%	14%
<b>Age</b>		
Average age at intake	29	27
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	17%	19%
Non-married	83%	81%
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Employed Full-Time	69%	70%
Employed Part-Time	23%	30%
Unemployed	8%	---
<b>Educational Status</b>		
Less than HS degree	23%	29%
HS degree	37%	29%
Some college	38%	36%
4 year college degree +	2%	7%
<b>Physical Health at Intake</b>		
Above average	11%	12%
Average	74%	74%
Below average	15%	14%
<b>Participant's Quality of Life*</b>		
Average rating	4.8	5.3
<b>Race</b>		
White	54%	67%
Native American	43%	33%
Other	4%	---
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Hispanic	16%	26%
<b>Parenting Status</b>		
Percent w/ dependent children	51%	40%
<b>Receiving Public Assistance</b>		
Yes	10%	17%
<b>Education/Treatment History</b>		
Yes	65%	72%

\* Quality of Life was rated using a 10 point scale with 10 representing the best possible quality of life.

## **2. Randomization: Comparison of Participants in DUI/Drug Court with Those Electing to Not Participate in DUI/Drug Court**

After being randomized into the Coconino County DUI/Drug Court program, individuals had the option of electing to not participate. People choosing to not participate in DUI/Drug Court were assigned to the standard process for managing offenses in the criminal justice system. Thirty percent of people randomized into DUI/Drug Court (25 of 82 people) elected to not participate in the program. Questions arise as to whether this 30 percent are different from the 70 percent of people who decided to participate in the DUI/Drug Court program.

Table 2 addresses the similarities and differences between the group of people electing to stay in the DUI/Drug Court program and the group electing to not participate in the program. Recognizing that this analysis involves small numbers of people (57 people remaining in DUI/Drug Court and 25 people opting out of DUI/Drug Court), the two populations are similar in composition. Just over half of people in both groups are white; similar percentages of both groups are Hispanic. The average age of people in both groups was similar at intake. Half of people in both groups had dependent children under 18. A majority of people in both groups were employed full-time at intake and three-quarters of both groups were of “average” health. Participants of both groups gave similar ratings to their quality of life.

There are some notable differences between the two populations, although the importance of these differences is difficult to assess with available information. The group electing to participate in the DUI/Drug Court has a greater proportion of women and a lesser proportion of men than the group electing to not participate in the program. Twenty-one percent of people staying with the program were married, while eight percent of people electing not to participate were married. People staying with the DUI/Drug Court program tend to be more educated, with 43 percent having some college experience or completing a four-year college degree. Thirty-three percent of people randomized into the program, but choosing to not participate, had a similar educational level at intake. While 12 percent of people staying in the program were receiving public assistance at intake, just four percent of people opting out of DUI/Drug Court were on public assistance. Another difference between these populations involves a prior history with education and treatment programs. People who chose not to participate in the DUI/Drug Court program tend to have more prior exposure to education and treatment programs. Seventy-eight percent of this group have a prior history with education and treatment programs compared with 60 percent of people deciding to stay in the program.

Overall, the group of people randomized into Coconino County’s DUI/Drug Court program and electing to remain in the program is similar in composition to the group electing to not participate in the program. Some differences between the two populations are evident, but given the small number of people falling into the respective groups and their broad similarity to DUI/Drug Court participants, these differences are not likely to challenge the validity of the experimental model in place for this evaluation.



**Table 2: Demographics of Clients Who Did / Did not enter DUI/Drug Court**

Attribute	People Randomized into DUI/Drug Court	
	Entered DUI/Drug Court (n=57)	Did not enter DUI/Drug Court (n=25)
<b>Race</b>		
White	53%	54%
Native American	45%	38%
Other	2%	8%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Hispanic	16%	17%
<b>Age</b>		
Average age at intake	30	28
<b>Parenting Status</b>		
Percent w/ dependent children	52%	50%
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Employed Full-Time	70%	64%
Employed Part-Time	21%	29%
Unemployed	9%	7%
<b>Physical Health at Intake</b>		
Above average	9%	17%
Average	76%	71%
Below average	16%	13%
<b>Quality of Life at Intake*</b>		
Average rating	4.9	4.7
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	78%	96%
Female	22%	4%
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	21%	8%
Non-married	79%	92%
<b>Educational Status</b>		
Less than HS degree	24%	21%
HS degree	33%	46%
Some college	41%	29%
4 year college degree +	2%	4%
<b>Receiving Public Assistance</b>		
Yes	12%	4%
<b>Education/Treatment History</b>		
Yes	60%	78%

\* Quality of Life was rated using a 10 point scale with 10 representing the best possible quality of life.

### 3. DUI/Drug Court Participants

Among people randomized into DUI/Drug Court and choosing to participate in the program, most were diagnosed as having a “drug dependence” problem (91%) rather than a “drug abuse” problem (see Table 3).<sup>2</sup> Six percent of this group was classified as having both an “abuse” and “dependence” problem. Alcohol is the primary drug of choice for group members (62%), followed by amphetamines (21%), and cannabis (14%). Group members have been using their primary drug of choice for an average of 12 years. At intake, they reported using their drug of choice for an average of 10 days during the previous month.

Almost two-thirds of DUI/Drug Court participants (60%) reported having a prior history of involvement with drug treatment or education programs. Among people previously involved in treatment or education programs, 15 percent participated in individual counseling, 34 percent participated in a residential program, 43 percent in an outpatient program, and six percent in an intensive outpatient program. One-third of program participants (34%) had previously been exposed to educational programming regarding drug-related issues.

**Table 3:  
Participant Profile – Drug Use History**

#### **Clinical Assessment of Drug/Alcohol Use**

Dependence	91%
Abuse	4%
Abuse/Dependence	6%

#### **Primary Substance of Choice**

Alcohol	62%
Amphetamine	21%
Cannabis	14%
Other	3%

Average years of use	12
Average days used per month	10

#### **Prior Treatment/ Education History:**

Yes	60%
No	40%

#### **Prior Treatment (60%)\***

Individual Counseling	15%
Residential Program	34%
Outpatient Program	43%
Intensive Outpatient Program	6%
Education	34%

\*Multiple Responses, figures represent percent of clients with a history of participating in different forms of treatment and education.

<sup>2</sup> The diagnoses of substance “abuse” and “dependence” is made using standardized screening measures based on the clinical diagnostic criteria set forth in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition* (DSM-IV). According to these criteria, “abuse” is characterized by “a destructive pattern of substance use, leading to significant social, occupational, or medical impairment.” “Dependence” is defined by the DSM-IV as “abuse” that occurs with the presence of several additional, and more serious characteristics, such as chemical tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, and unsuccessful efforts to control use.

Nearly all DUI/Drug Court program participants (98%) have a prior history of involvement with the criminal justice system (see Table 4). Before committing their current offense, participants had an average of 6.5 prior convictions. The median number of convictions was 4.0.<sup>3</sup> Because one participant had an excessively large number of convictions (46) and the next largest number of convictions was 22, the median average is a better reflection of the groups overall history of prior convictions.

One-third of all recorded prior convictions (34%) involved drug-related offenses, including criminal traffic (DUI), drug possession, or possession of drug paraphernalia. Three percent of recorded convictions involved property-related crimes such as damaged property, forgery, and theft. Nearly two-thirds of reported convictions (63%) involved a wide range of “other” crimes. The list of other crimes includes assault, domestic violence, disorderly conduct, and failure to comply.

Most DUI/Drug Court participants (94%) had a prior felony conviction. Among people with prior convictions, the average number of convictions (mean) was 1.8 and the median average was 1.0 conviction. Eighty-two percent of DUI/Drug Court participants had prior felony misdemeanor convictions. The mean average was 5.8 convictions and the median average was 3.0 convictions. Forty percent of group participants had prior convictions for a drug-related offense. The mean average of prior drug convictions was 1.9, representing no difference from the median average.

Table 5 provides information about the current offense which ultimately brought people to the DUI/Drug Court program. One-third of this group (32%) committed a felony and two-thirds of group participants (66%) committed both felony and misdemeanor

**Table 4:  
Participant Profile – Criminal History**

<b>Prior Convictions</b>	
Yes	98%
Average number (mean)	6.5
Average number (median)	4.0
<b>Conviction Type</b>	
Property-related	3%*
Drug/Alcohol-related	34%*
Other	63%*
<b>Prior Felony Convictions</b>	
Yes	94%
Average number (mean)	1.8
Average number (median)	1.0
<b>Prior Felony Misdemeanor Convictions</b>	
Yes	82%
Average number (mean)	5.8
Average number (median)	3.0
<b>Prior Drug/Alcohol Convictions</b>	
Yes	40%
Average number (mean)	1.9
Average number (median)	2.0

\* Although this is a multiple response question, conviction type is reported as a proportion of all identified convictions.

<sup>3</sup> Mean average is the mathematical average of all values divided by the number of cases. Median average represents the midpoint in a list of values.

offenses. Half of participants (54%) were given jail time for their offenses and six percent were sentenced to prison with the Arizona Department of Corrections. These sentences become stipulated sentences at time of entry into drug court. Jail and prison time will not be served if the offender successfully graduates from the DUI/Drug Court program. Nearly all participants were recorded as paying probation service fees (98%). Other types of fees or fines assessed include cost of defense fees (19%), other fees (64%), fines (58%), and restitution (6%). Among people sentenced to jail, the average sentence was for 26 days. Among the small number of people sentenced to DOC, the average sentence was for eight months. The average amount of fines and fees levied was \$847. The average probation fee assessed to members of the DUI/Drug Court participant group was \$46.

<b>Table 5: Participant Profile – Current Offense</b>			
<b>Offense Type:</b>			
Felony		32%	
Misdemeanor		2%	
Both		66%	
<b>Sentence:</b>			
Jail Time		54%	
	Avg. Jail Days		26
DOC		6%	
	Avg. DOC Months		8
Probation Service Fees		98%	
	Avg. Probation Fee		\$46
Cost of Defense Fees		19%	
Other Fees		64%	
Fines		58%	
Restitution		6%	
	Avg. Fines/Fees		\$847
Community Service		2%	

This program evaluation includes data from 18 months of Coconino County DUI/Drug Court operations. The span of time runs from the first day of offenders being randomized into either the experimental or control groups (May 1, 2001) until October 31, 2002. At the conclusion of the study, 80 percent of DUI/Drug Court participants had either graduated from the program or remained active within the program at various stages of completion (see Table 6). Sixteen percent of DUI/Drug Court participants graduated after completing the four phased program. Sixty-four percent of participants were active in the program as of October 31, 2002: 14 percent (8) were in Phase I, 13 percent (7) were in Phase II, 13 percent (7) were in Phase III, and 25 percent (14) were in Phase IV. Among the 20 percent of participants failing out of the DUI/Drug Court program, nine (16%) were terminated from the program by the DUI/Drug Court team and warrants have been issued for two (4%) participants.

<b>Table 6: Retention of Group Participants</b>			
<b>Retention</b>	<b>80%</b>		
Program Graduates	16%	(9)	
Active (Phases I – IV)	64%	(36)	
<b>Failure</b>	<b>20%</b>		
Termination	16%	(9)	
Warrant Issued	4%	(2)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>(56)</b>	

#### 4. Comparison Of Programs

One of the primary benefits of this outcomes evaluation is the ability to assess whether or not there are concrete benefits for participation in the DUI/Drug Court program when compared with cases being handled through the traditional criminal justice process. The data, in fact, reveal several differences between these two processes. First, this section explores differences in the ways that the programs impact offenders. Second, it reviews differences in the costs associated with DUI/Drug Court program and the traditional criminal justice process.

#### Offender Impact

Generally speaking, Coconino County DUI/Drug Court participants have more contact with criminal justice personnel during an average month than control group members: they spend more time in the courtroom and have more contacts with probation personnel. As seen in Table 7, DUI/Drug Court participants are in the courtroom for an average of 2.4 visits each month, while people in the control group are in the courtroom an average of 0.5 days per month. Program participants experience an average of 6.7 treatment days during an average month and control group members experience 1.2 treatment days each month. DUI/Drug Court participants have more contact with probation officers than control group members. Group participants have an average of 5.6 contacts per month with probation compared with 3.5 contacts per month for the

Table 7: Comparison of Program Impacts		
Item	Drug Court	Control
<b>Criminal Justice System Contact</b>		
Courtroom Visits (average per month)	2.4	0.5
Treatment Days (average per month)	6.7	1.2
Probation Contacts (average per month)	5.6	3.5
Jail Days (average month)	1.6	5.8
DOC Days (average month)	0.4	2.3
<b>Contributions to Society</b>		
Number Of Hours Worked (average week)	32.1	29.8
Number of Hours in School (average week)	1.3	0.0
Amount of Money Paid to Court (average month)	\$28.86	\$7.34
<b>Drug Tests (average month)</b>		
Number Taken	6.1	1.0
Number Refused	0.1	0.1
Percent Negative	95%	79%
Percent Positive	4%	18%
<b>Additional Offenses (number in average month)</b>	.01	.03

control group.

At the same time as DUI/Drug Court participants have more contact with a variety of individuals and offices in the criminal justice system, this group spends fewer days in jail or in DOC each month than members of the control group. Control group members spent more than three times the number of days in jail during an average month than DUI/Drug Court participants (5.8 days versus 1.6 days). Members of the control group spend an average of 2.3 days in prison each month compared to an average of 0.4 days in prison for DUI/Drug Court participants.

DUI/Drug Court participants make more positive contributions to society during an average month than offenders processed in the traditional criminal justice system. They work a greater number of hours per month (32.1 hours versus 29.8 hours for the control group) and attend school more frequently (1.3 hours per week versus 0 hours for the control group). In addition, DUI/Drug Court participants pay more money to the court each month than control group members (\$28.86 compared to \$7.34).

DUI/Drug Court participants were much more frequently subjected to drug tests than control group members. The difference between drug tests taken by participants in the DUI/Drug Court program and control group members is a magnitude of 6. Despite being tested more frequently, DUI/Drug Court participant test results are more likely to be negative than those of control group members. Ninety-five percent of DUI/Drug Court participant drug tests were negative compared with 79 percent of drug tests for control group members.

Members of the control group were three times more likely to commit additional offenses than DUI/Drug Court members. An average of one new offense was committed for every 33 control group members each month. In contrast, an average of one new offense was committed for every 100 DUI/Drug Court participants each month. When considering this information, it is important to keep in mind that the number of new offenses committed by members of both groups is quite small.

## **Cost Impact**

DUI/Drug Court programs are often put forward as a cost-efficient method for the criminal justice system to handle a large volume of drug-related cases. Cost analysis is a particularly inviting mechanism for comparing DUI/Drug Court to traditional criminal justice programming because some program features can easily be attached to specific costs. The value of other program features is less easily assessed. This limitation suggests that a cost analysis methodology can serve useful purposes, but is not a definitive strategy for evaluating program efficiency.

The Coconino County DUI/Drug Court Coordinator provided the SRL research team with specific costs estimates for the following program features: courtroom visits, treatment sessions, probation contacts, jail time, prison time, and drug testing.

Information regarding the cost of prison time was obtained from the Arizona Department of Corrections. Costs are reflected in Table 8. In this table, cost figures are rounded to the nearest dollar. Each cost was multiplied by per person averages associated with experimental and control group participants (original information provided in Table 6). Figures were summed and a comparative cost analysis was conducted.

The average DUI/Drug Court participant costs Coconino County approximately \$534 per month. A person proceeding through the traditional criminal justice system costs Coconino County approximately \$758 per month. The monthly differences in cost are largely due to the increased likelihood of control group members spending more time in jail and prison each month. Jail costs Coconino County \$80 per day and prison costs the County an average of \$53 per day.

<b>Table 8: Program Costs</b>			
<b>Item</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>DUI/Drug Court</b>	<b>Control</b>
Courtroom Visits*	\$3.88/minute	\$19 (2.4)	\$19 (0.5)
Treatment Days	\$19/session	\$127 (6.7)	\$23(1.2)
Probation Contacts	\$35/visit	\$196 (5.6)	\$123 (3.5)
Jail Days**	\$80/day	\$128 (1.6)	\$464 (5.8)
DOC Days***	\$53/day	\$21 (0.4)	\$122 (2.3)
Drug Tests	\$7/test	\$43 (6.1)	\$7 (1.0)
<b>Cost per month</b>		<b>\$534</b>	<b>\$758</b>
<b>Total program cost ****</b>		<b>\$6,408</b>	<b>\$22,740</b>

\* Courtrooms visits vary in length. According to the Coconino County DUI/Drug Court Coordinator, a program participant is typically in the courtroom for two minutes per visit. In this table 2.4 visits translates to 4.8 minutes. It is estimated that a typical courtroom visit lasts ten minutes. In this table, an average of 0.5 visits per month for control group members translates to five minutes.

\*\* Jail cost per day provided by Coconino County DUI/Drug Court Coordinator.

\*\*\* DOC costs provided by Arizona Department of Corrections Public Information Officer.

\*\*\*\* The DUI/Drug Court program is averaging 12 months. Drug offenders not participating in DUI/Drug Court are typically involved in the criminal justice system between two and three years. A midpoint of 2.5 years (30 months) is used in this table to project total costs incurred by Coconino County for each member of the control group.

Coconino County Drug Court officials report that although DUI/Drug Court program is a 10 month program, the average time of completion is closer to 12 months. Over the 12 month cycle of the program, a DUI/Drug Court client costs Coconino County approximately \$6,408. It is also reported that the average term for people processed through the traditional criminal justice system is between two and three years. When this model accounts for the longer length of time it takes for offenders to proceed

through the traditional criminal justice process (approximately 30 months – the midpoint of control group program length), cost differences between processing through DUI/Drug Court and the traditional criminal justice system drastically increase. While DUI/Drug Court participants cost the County approximately \$6,408 to complete the program, the traditional criminal justice system costs the County approximately \$22,740 per person. Thus, on a per person basis, the traditional criminal justice system is 3.5 times more costly than the County's DUI/Drug Court program. The difference of \$16,332 per person is significant, especially during periods of economic constraint. In Coconino County, as in other jurisdictions around the nation, DUI/Drug Court is a cost-efficient method for processing drug offenders.



## **F. PROCESS EVALUATION: FINDINGS**

This section of the report describes the findings of the process evaluation conducted by the Social Research Laboratory. The process evaluation contained two components designed to elicit from participants their reactions to the DUI/Drug Court experience: exit interviews and a focus group. The results of each evaluation strategy are described below.

### **1. DUI/Drug Court Participant Exit Interviews**

Exit interviews were conducted with DUI/Drug Court participants who either graduated from the program or were terminated from the program. Overall, a total of 11 exit interviews were completed. Of the nine participants who graduated during the evaluation period, seven exit interviews were completed. Of the nine DUI/Drug Court terminations, 4 exit interviews were performed.

At the time of exit from the DUI/Drug Court program, clients were generally at the same educational level as when they began the program. The majority of clients continued to earn less than \$10,000 per year. Nearly half of the clients remained unmarried (46%) and nearly half were now living with a partner (45%). Eighty percent of those exiting DUI/Drug Court are not on public assistance. Most of the interviewees have children ranging in ages from 0-4 years of age. When asked to rate their overall health, the largest percentage of clients said “good” (68%). Most interviewees said ten months or more had passed since their last use of drugs or alcohol.

### **Comments**

In addition to the quantitative data gathered during exit Interviews, participants were asked their perceptions of various aspects of DUI/Drug Court and asked to suggest changes that might strengthen the program. Overall, responses to these questions were very positive. Praise for the program was plentiful and criticism, when provided, was constructive. Participant comments covered a number of topics including strengths and weaknesses of the DUI/Drug Court program, and relationships with DUI/Drug Court team members.

Two themes emerged from responses to a question about the best aspects of DUI/Drug Court. The first of these themes involved the value of the program’s structure. Both graduates and individuals terminated from the program spoke very highly of the program’s structure, specifically of the value of regular urinary analysis tests and contacts with the presiding judge. Several clients suggested that it was the knowledge of an upcoming urinalysis or court appearance that allowed them to stay clean and sober during times they might otherwise have used substances.

The second theme to emerge was the helpfulness of everyone involved with the program. Interactions with members of the DUI/Drug Court team and other clients were consistently seen as positive, and important for maintaining sobriety. Several people identified the first DUI/Drug Court judge as particularly helpful. This Judge was viewed quite favorably by both graduates and non-compliant individuals for his caring and supportive orchestration of the DUI/Drug Court experience. Other graduates described counselors as very caring and supportive. Interactions with most of the DUI/Drug Court staff were encouraging.

Two themes emerged from a discussion about problems associated with DUI/Drug Court. One theme involved the manner in which individual cases are decided. The concept of the program being based on individualized treatment and handling of each participant's case was considered valuable. People understood that decisions regarding specific sanctions are made on a case by case basis, within guidelines identified in the DUI/Drug Court Participant Handbook. However, some participants tended to view program customization as arbitrary rather than being a central tenet of the program's treatment philosophy. These people perceived inconsistencies in the administration of sanctions, suggesting that the severity of sanctions for individuals varied widely despite similar behaviors. For example, one graduate indicated that s/he was given jail time for her/his fourth sanction while another individual's fourth sanction (for the same behavior) consisted of an additional urinary analysis. Although this concern was largely raised by non-compliant individuals, it was also voiced by several program graduates.

The second theme to emerge from questions about the weaknesses of the DUI/Drug Court program concerned changes made to program requirements after participants already plead into the DUI/Drug Court program. Participants voiced their disappointment with increases in the required number of support group meetings. Some characterized the changes as "misleading" or "a broken contract, because the program (they) ended up in was not the same program terms agreed to in the beginning." In discussing their frustration with program changes, several graduates mentioned the difficulty they had managing family affairs, employment, and school, with additional program requirements. One respondent even suggested that the additional stress added by balancing her/his other commitments with the changed requirements brought her/him closest to a relapse than at any other time during the program.

Respondents indicated that this problem was greatest during the later phases of the program. One of the attractive features of the program initially was the decreasing amounts of structure toward the end of the program. This allowed people to "gradually ease back into a substance-free life." Adding additional commitments to later phases lead several recent graduates to be concerned with the sudden lack of structure that accompanied program completion. Respondents indicated that additional requirements drastically changed the approach of the program and its orientation toward re-entry into society.

The following series of closing statements were made by interviewees:

- I was happy I got arrested because my addiction was out of control.
- I have a strong family history of alcoholism and needed intervention.
- I relapsed with methamphetamine during the second week in the program. I was pulled over by DPS and rearrested. I had to attend 2 counseling sessions, 1 probation contact, and 1 DUI/Drug Court hearing, but now I'm back on track.
- I feel Drug Court is good, but only for those willing/ready to quit. I liked the sanctions rather than just expulsion. I think meth users need more drug tests because, as of now they can still use and pass tests.
- I took responsibility for my drug use and problems but relapsed with meth repetitively. I really want to abstain from use. I do not live in an environment conducive for recovery but I have a positive attitude.
- I liked DUI/Drug Court and the opportunity to "get my life back." I want to be involved in mentorship later.
- I was glad DUI/Drug Court was here. ... I appreciate all the education, personal growth, (and) especially anger management. It is very helpful. Anger management should be included in Phase 1.

## **2. Focus Group Findings**

Coconino County DUI/Drug Court personnel asked the Social Research Laboratory to conduct a focus group with program participants. Program administrators were interested in qualitative feedback from current participants and graduates. The purpose of the focus group conducted for this evaluation was to understand DUI/Drug Court participants' opinions, criticisms, and suggestions concerning the DUI/Drug Court program. To get at these concerns, the focus group probed these specific topics: participants' experience with other treatment programs, strengths and weaknesses of the program, value of the program structure, and suggestions for improvements. The focus group also addressed specific components of the DUI/Drug Court program including the role played by urinary analysis tests, probation checks, and appearances before the judge. The focus group concluded by asking participants to describe aspects of the program that were most helpful and least helpful in remaining drug and alcohol free.

The focus group was held with eight participants on January 9, 2003, from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm at Coconino County Health Department. The group composition was racially and ethnically diverse, including five Native Americans, one Hispanic and two whites. The group consisted of an equal number of men and women. Participants' level of involvement with the DUI/Drug Court program varied. Some participants were just beginning the program, and others were close to completing the program. All phases of the program were represented.

## **Prior Experience with the Criminal Justice System**

The focus group began with a discussion of participants' prior experience with the criminal justice system, other DUI/Drug Court programs, both inpatient and outpatient drug and alcohol treatment programs, and probation. The purpose of this discussion was to gather background information that would establish a context for understanding participants' experiences with the Coconino County DUI/Drug Court program.

Participants had a wide range of prior involvement with the criminal justice system. Experiences included prior arrests, payment of monetary fines, probation, incarceration in various jails and prisons.

"This is the first program that I've been in since I've been getting into trouble...I've had other arrests on marijuana charges. Those are taken care of by fines and so other than that I've never been on probation or any programs, so this program's keeping me out of the bottle and prison."

"I've been in and out of jail a lot, both here in Flag and in \*\*\*, mainly because of alcoholism."

Focus group participants said they had a wide variety of prior experiences with drug and alcohol treatment programs. Most participants had received some form of treatment in the past, experiencing both inpatient and outpatient treatment programs. Some participants reported prior involvement with a substance abuse therapist in one-on-one therapy sessions.

Although most participants believed their DUI/Drug Court experience was more effective than other programs in which they participated, participants said it is difficult to compare self-motivated and court mandated treatment.

"It's different when the courts are telling you to get sober than when you want to be sober for yourself. There's a big difference there. It's inside me. It's in my heart...whether I'm gonna' be sober or not. "

One participant felt the prior treatment they received was better in some ways than the DUI/Drug Court program because they were able to see an individual therapist. This person felt that individual therapy is more effective than group therapy because it is difficult for some people to confide in strangers. Several participants agreed with this assessment. Another participant said the DUI/Drug Court program was more effective than previous treatment because confidentiality was more fully protected in the Coconino County program.

## Program Strengths

Focus group participants were asked to discuss strengths of the DUI/Drug Court program. Some participants discussed the importance of forming friendships with their program peers. These friendships provide an important support system that people can rely on for help with problems and situations they encounter.

Several participants praised the treatment program known to participants as the Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP). IOP provides the opportunity to be removed from the immediate situations associated with substance abuse. Removal from an immediate situation allowed participants to think more clearly about their substance abuse problem and to consider what they wanted to do next.

(What they liked most about the program) “My peers. There’s somebody there to always talk to. I never had that before. I always had to go through my sister or something... So it’s good to have somebody that’ll understand you, know we’re you’re coming from. “

“You make good friends going to these programs. And that’s the best part of it. We get support and one of your best friends is in the program. And you know they’re going through it too... I like the IOP classes and the counselors are real good from my experience. They’re there to help you and that’s probably the best part of it ...”

## Program Weaknesses

Focus group participants were also asked to discuss their perceptions of weaknesses within the DUI/Drug Court program. In this conversation, consensus emerged around two perceived weaknesses: required attendance at support group meetings (such as Alcoholics Anonymous) and the changing personnel.

Most participants shared the perspective that support group meetings seem punitive. Although there is some choice over which support groups to attend,<sup>4</sup> many felt their schedules would only allow them to regularly attend Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or a related group (such as Narcotics Anonymous) to fulfill the program requirements. Participants expressed concern about being expected to attend AA meetings for the wrong reasons. Several mentioned that they might attend AA meetings on their own, but did not like that they felt forced to attend. One participant noted that AA meetings might not be appropriate for people with narcotic addictions. Another felt that AA meetings were not particularly helpful.

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<sup>4</sup> The DUI/Drug Court Program currently accepts (as credit for support group requirements) attendance at the following: Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Sweat Lodges, Religious Services, Life Skills Classes, Yoga, Game Night (up to 4 per month), Recovery Inc., SMART Recovery, Traditional Ceremonies, Many Faces of Addiction, Talking Circles (NACA), Martial Arts, DUI/Drug Court Alumni Group, Other 12-Step Meetings, and Verifiable Group Exercise Activities.

“They don’t talk about how to get better yourself... They just talk about the past and what they have gone through... but not how to better yourself and give you advice about life. I feel like most of them just go there to go down memory lane.”

Another concern discussed by participants is the feeling that individual confidentiality is compromised when DUI/Drug Court participants must receive a signature at AA and other meetings to validate their attendance. Some believe other AA members frown on DUI/Drug Court participants attending meetings because this group is viewed as not voluntarily participating in the AA program.

“They’re asking me to go to an outside support group, supposedly I’m supposed to be ‘anonymous’ as far as these support groups go - and I’m not. Because I have to get signature, you know. I mean I’d go to seven meetings a week and not get a signature, if I’m there for me. If I’m there for DUI/Drug Court, what good is that doing me?”

The second program weakness to be identified within the focus group involved recent personnel changes. Particular attention was paid to a recent change in the presiding judge. People consider the former judge to have a better understanding of the disease of addiction. The new judge expresses a different attitude towards DUI/Drug Court participants. Some people also noted an increase in DUI/Drug Court program requirements under the new judge and linked these events together.

Focus group participants remarked that program participants interact differently with the new judge. The first judge understood DUI/Drug Court participants but “people just hide from the second judge.” One participant said they simply tell the new judge what he wants to hear. Another said they tried to explain their situation to the judge, but the judge “just threw the book at them.”

One additional weakness raised within the focus group involved the fact that only males have the option of attending sweats and receiving credit for their attendance. Some women said they would also like this option made available to them.

## **Phase System**

The DUI/Drug Court phase system was discussed in-depth by focus group participants. Everyone understood that the program starts out at a very intense level and, over the course of the program, participants are slowly released back into society. However, at the end of Phase IV, some expressed concern about simply being dropped from the program. As one person said, “It’s just intense-intense-intense, then ‘bye.’” Another participant questioned whether it would be more effective to have even requirements across all phases.

Some participants returned to conversation about changes in the phase system over time. One participant remarked that the Phase System was once based on a gradual reintroduction into society but now the later phases are all about AA meetings. Another participant wondered about having more options available to receive credit for sober actions.

“One thing we were doing is starting up a softball league with the group of people that are in our program...instead of going to these meetings which are not even helping people... That would be good for our team because that is like a group thing for OUR group instead of going into a meeting where there’s all kinds of people you don’t know. And it’d be healthy, instead of going into a smoke-filled room.”

### **Abstinence Checks**

Participants discussed the random use of urinary analysis (UAs) and breathalyzers in the DUI/Drug Court program. Most participants agreed that the use of these checks were necessary and helpful. DUI/Drug Court clients knew that scheduled and random checks would take place and that they had to have clean UAs and breath tests to stay in the program. One participant said knowing they would have UAs during the program kept them from using.

### **Interactions with Drug Court Personnel**

The focus group discussion turned toward experiences with different members of the DUI/Drug Court team. Two very different opinions emerged about interactions with probation officers. One participant believed that probation officers really wanted her/him to succeed and was thankful that the probation officer “hunted” her/him. Probation checks are a necessary part of staying “on track.” Another person felt that probation officers did not help with sobriety. They felt probation officers were only involved to throw the book at people. People concluded this discussion by noting that different probation officers use very different approaches.

“One thing I want to say is that probation is not helping out with sobriety because they don’t come like once a week to check up on you at your house. You go and check in with him/her and you see how the program’s going, but they’re not even talking about sobriety. They’re there just to throw everything in your face like, “yea, do this or you got to show up in court.” Well, there’s no support with probation.”

“It is different for me. I mean, I was really and truly thankful when (my probation officer) busted me. You know, ‘cause if s/he hadn’t I’d have just kept on going, worse and worse and worse, you know?”

“Our probation officers, they’re real cool. “

Mixed opinions also emerged about appearances before the judge; these visits were seen as anxiety provoking but helpful to keeping program participants focused on the goal of recovery. Some participants viewed their time before the judge as punitive.

“It depends on how well you’re doing in the program. That’s how he speaks to you. If you’re messing up, he’ll totally dog you to death. He’ll say a lot of things that will just put you down, make you feel like going out and using or something.”

“When I was screwing up...he’d have something to say like...’Are you ready to go to jail yet?’...He should not have said that to me because it made me feel like, ‘Well, he don’t give a shit about me anyway.’ I might as well just go out and get a drink or something.”

There was a sense among most focus group participants that most members of the DUI/Drug Court team were genuinely interested in seeing each person succeed. People praised counselors and probation officers alike.

“The counselors are awesome...my experience with the prosecutor and with our attorney has been awesome. I mean, even the prosecutor. S/he’s been so cool. I mean s/he’s supposed to be prosecuting me. “

A few focus group participants noted that they had relatively little contact with DUI/Drug Court team members and most of their relationships were with counselors. Another wished for more frequent and varied contact.

“Well now my relationship with the counselors, that’s good, but that’s only like once a week. And other than that there’s no contact. It’s good when you go in and see one and you can talk about how the program is, how you need support. Your relationship with the prosecutor and the judge—there’s none in the courtroom. That’s the only time you get to see them.”

### **Most Helpful and Least Helpful Aspects of DUI/Drug Court**

When asked to discuss aspects of the DUI/Drug Court program that were most helpful and least helpful, group participants tended to focus on the positive. Several participants stated that the program had been their main support system in their struggle to remain sober. Many participants noted that DUI/Drug Court helped them to realize and understand their impact on others and their responsibility to become and remain sober for both themselves and others. This was especially true for individuals with children, families, and partners.

Other focus group members praised the help and support they received from counselors and probation officers. Several group members discussed the fear of prison



and the need to stay out of jail as their primary motivation for recovery. Another participant identified peer support as most helpful to success within the program. Most were sure they would still be using or in jail or prison if it were not for DUI/Drug Court giving them the opportunity to get the support they needed to turn their lives around.

“[What’s keeping me sober] Right now it’s the program. Before I didn’t have my mind in the right place because I didn’t think and I wasn’t looking for help. But I’m in this program ‘cause somebody helped me and I can thank my family too.”

“Just going to the meetings and the counselors and knowing everybody else is in the same situation that you were in but also that they’re supporting you and keeping you sober. It’s heading us down the right path instead of down the wrong one... I really have to change.”

Participants agreed that DUI/Drug Court is a successful program and everyone thanks those involved in DUI/Drug Court for their support.

“Just that I like the program. I mean, before this I could not quit for even a day. I’d try to quit one day and the next day we made it ‘til 3 o’clock. I’d be in Phoenix right now and not have any job ... But I (can now) imagine having a house, a new car, I mean, all the things that I have now I can thank DUI/Drug Court (for) because it did get me out of what I was doing. And it did put me in a position where I can do things, things on my own.”

## **Suggestions for Improvements**

Focus group participants were given the opportunity to suggest improvements that would benefit the DUI/Drug Court program in the future. Participants offered the following suggestions:

- More readily accessible support group activities should be added to the list of acceptable programs.
- Support group meeting requirements should be reduced or removed completely.
- Coconino County DUI/Drug Court should focus more on personal accountability.
- Coconino County DUI/Drug Court should provide more options for continued support after graduation.

In summary, responses to the focus group inquiries were very positive. The helpful impact of the DUI/Drug Court program on participants and their recovery is revealed in participants’ comments. The structure of the programmatic activities and interactions with other recovering individuals are viewed as extremely beneficial.

Clients identified some weaknesses and areas for improvement to the DUI/Drug Court program. These weaknesses generally involve changes made to the program during the course of the clients' participation. It is anticipated that as the program continues to develop and incorporate these changes into regular operations, these negative perceptions will diminish.

Overall, clients were generally quite satisfied with their experiences in the DUI/Drug Court program. They view the program as extremely helpful to their continuing recovery from substance abuse and to their positive development as individual members of society.

## **G. STUDY LIMITATIONS**

Every research and evaluation study has both strengths and limitations. In reviewing other DUI/Drug Court evaluation studies, many researchers cite problems with missing data, inconsistent data, data error entries, data from conflicting sources, and inadequate data management systems. Additionally, studies are located within a cultural and historical context that can be affected by events beyond the control of researchers. Despite the best efforts of Coconino County DUI/Drug Court and SRL staff, various limitations were encountered in this study. The following section outlines some of the challenges and limitations faced by this study.

### **Missing Data**

The primary limitation of this study involves missing data. In an ideal research situation, data for all study participants would be readily available. Unfortunately, the population under study is highly mobile, under court supervision, and sometimes less motivated to provide reliable and accurate information. Additionally, information for different types of clients was housed in different locations and in different databases monitored by different staff.

There is a fairly large difference in the amount of data available for DUI/Drug Court clients as compared to members of the control group. This was due to several factors. First, DUI/Drug Court clients were under close court supervision and their files were readily available to DUI/Drug Court staff. Second, DUI/Drug Court clients were more likely to remain in the area to complete DUI/Drug Court. If DUI/Drug Court clients were unable to complete their treatment program, they would be moved to incarceration. In contrast, control group clients participated in the traditional criminal justice process, including incarceration, probation, monitoring, and some treatment intervention. The tracking system for control group clients was less detailed and information was more difficult to obtain. Control group clients were more likely to lose contact and “disappear” from the system altogether despite the court requirement of remaining in the local jurisdiction.

### **Tracking Clients**

Tracking subjects over time is a challenging proposition under the best circumstances and can dramatically influence the evaluation of a program. For this study, an 18 month evaluation period was defined beginning May 1, 2001 and ending October 31, 2002. Several DUI/Drug Court evaluations have tracked program participants for a minimum of two years. A few have tracked clients for up to five years. These studies often include pre-program, in-program and post-program outcomes and provide an expanded understanding of treatment impacts. Since the Coconino County DUI/Drug Court treatment program is a 10-month program, this study lacks complete data for many clients who began their treatment later in the evaluation period. If resources are

available in the future, it would be valuable to track clients for a longer time period and to include post-treatment outcomes. If long-term sobriety is the primary goal of DUI/Drug Court, measuring behavior for a longer time period would provide a better understanding of the enduring effects of the Coconino County DUI/Drug Court program.

### **Small Sample Size**

When this study was initially planned, it was expected that the DUI/Drug Court treatment program would include a larger number of clients. At the end of the evaluation period, it was projected that more than 100 experimental group and 100 control group members would be tracked and monitored. Slightly more than one-half that number actually participated in DUI/Drug Court during the timeframe of this study. Smaller numbers limit the types of analyses that can be conducted. As these groups are further divided into sub-categories (e.g., male/female, age groups, etc.), the numbers in each category become increasingly smaller, making analysis less robust. Therefore, it is important to use caution in interpreting results and to understand that findings presented in this report are primarily descriptive in nature.

### **Imprecise and Changing Measures**

All measurement tools are only as good as their ability to accurately and reliably measure what they are intended to measure. Some features such as age, number of children and days in jail, lend themselves to easy measurement. Other features are more difficult to measure: quality of life and satisfaction levels, for example. In this study, standardized measures were utilized whenever possible. In cases where standardized measures were not available, a measure was developed and pre-tested. The same measurement tools were used to study both the experimental and control groups, thus equalizing the effects of the instruments.

In an effort to standardize data collection, attempts were made to involve the same personnel throughout the study. However, due to staff turnover, some data were collected by other personnel. Collection procedure changes such as this can introduce error and bias into a study. To reduce bias, new personnel were trained and provided the same information as previous data collection personnel. Despite this, some forms may have been interpreted differently and some data collected in different formats by different personnel. At the end of the data collection period, SRL personnel reviewed collected data with DUI/Drug Court staff and attempted to rectify outstanding differences and anomalies.

## **Data Quality**

All efforts were made to ensure accurate and reliable data quality. Prior to electronic coding, all forms underwent an initial paper review. Data were entered into an electronic dataset where all data entries were double-checked by a different coder and data summaries reviewed for errant numbers. Because some data comes directly from clients, recall error, unintentional and intentional bias in reporting, and memory lapses can provide less than perfect data. In cases where other information was available, the more accurate information was used. In cases where only reported data was available, attempts were made to verify the accuracy of client reporting.

## **Client Participation**

In addition to the quantitative data that was collected on both the experimental and control groups, qualitative data was gathered to provide a deeper understanding of client experiences in the program. Clients were contacted by SRL staff to conduct an exit interview at the time they exited the program. Clients who graduated were contacted as well as those incarcerated for non-compliance. It was easier to complete interviews with those in jail, because DUI/Drug Court program graduates were difficult to reach and contact. SRL staff made many efforts to arrange interviews with all DUI/Drug Court graduates; despite this effort, only 11 exit interviews were completed.

Another technique used to collect qualitative data involved focus group methodology. A DUI/Drug Court focus group was held in January, 2003. SRL staff contacted DUI/Drug Court participants and graduates over a two month period. Eight of 12 invitees participated in the focus group. Although dinner and monetary incentives were offered, no DUI/Drug Court graduates attended. The focus group was very successful and provided rich, textured data. It should be kept in mind, however, that individuals participating in the focus group and exit interview process provide information about their perceptions and experience. This information may differ from actual program construction or intentions.

## H. ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF KEY FINDINGS

This section analyzes key findings from the Social Research Laboratory's evaluation of the Coconino County DUI/Drug Court program. There are many strengths of the current study that should be highlighted. It is particularly noteworthy that some problems plaguing drug court evaluations have been avoided in the present study (Office of Justice Programs, 1998a, 1998b; Belenko, 2002). For example, most research on drug courts failed to randomly assign participants to an experimental or control group; a key strength of this study was its experimental design. Previous research has often failed to include any process data regarding participants' views of the program; this study obtained qualitative information via a focus group methodology and an exit interview to capture participant's views of the drug court process.

However, the findings presented here should be interpreted with caution for several reasons. First, all research projects have limitations. Some of the limitations of this particular project have consistently affected research on drug courts nationwide. Reports by such national organizations as the Office of Justice Program's (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998a, 1998b) consistently note, for example, that small sample size and data collection challenges are common problems facing drug court evaluation research. Small sample size makes it difficult to draw broad generalizations about the findings. Second, the present study was situated in a rural jurisdiction in the southwest. Much of the research on drug courts has been conducted in large urban areas, predominantly on the east and west coasts. These jurisdictions tend to have a larger percentage of hard drug users in their samples than in the Coconino County sample. Thus, comparisons with other studies should proceed cautiously.

In sum, though the current study has several limitations, it also has numerous strengths that do allow some conclusions to be drawn. The data presented here provide two kinds of important information: 1) the data reveal a great deal about the impact of drug court on this sample of offenders, in this jurisdiction, 2) the data can be used to compare this jurisdiction with trends and patterns revealed in other drug court evaluations, though such comparisons must proceed with caution. What follows are broad themes that emerge from this study. Each theme is illustrated using data from the study, as well as by drawing on findings from existing drug court research. After describing these themes, some implications of this research are discussed.

### 1. Analysis

***DUI/Drug Court offers a significant alternative to the traditional criminal justice approach for handling alcohol and drug using offenders.***

Drug courts were historically implemented to achieve certain goals: reductions in incarceration, efficient management of drug cases, and effective treatment of drug offenders (Nolan, 2001). Drug courts were to provide "therapeutic jurisprudence"; the courts would facilitate the provision of therapeutic and auxiliary services to offenders in

order to reduce substance abuse and criminal offending. Thus, drug courts were to be “different” from the traditional criminal justice process by providing greater attention to individual offenders, a larger focus on treatment and provision of services, greater accountability for drug use, and more rapid responses to relapses and successes.

This study reveals that the Coconino County DUI/Drug Court program is different from the traditional criminal justice process within the county. DUI/Drug Court begins by individualizing a treatment approach for each offender. The data illustrates that program participants have more contact with criminal justice personnel in an average month than those processed through the traditional criminal justice system; they also have more courtroom visits, more time in treatment and have more contacts with probation personnel. As noted in the focus group session, for many it seemed as though the DUI/Drug Court staff and judges care about client successes, while also holding them accountable for relapses. Respondents experienced greater accountability for alcohol and drug use as evidenced by the far greater frequency of drug testing and greater supervision over their behavior. Although the focus group data does not represent all participants, it can be said with certainty that at least some clients of DUI/Drug Court felt that the threat of sanctions deterred them from substance use and abuse, as well as criminal offending, at least during the time they were participating in the Coconino County DUI/Drug Court. Participants in the focus group also valued the alternative DUI/Drug Court provided to the traditional criminal justice process.

This finding is consistent with the vast majority of studies on drug courts (U.S. Department of Justice, 1997a, 1998b). Research has concluded that drug courts are fundamentally different than traditional criminal justice responses to drug offenders. Although qualitative research on drug courts is rare, projects incorporating interviews or focus groups with drug court participants reveal that many participants find drug courts to be more humane and more fair than the traditional criminal justice process (Logan, et. al, 2000; Gottfredson, et. al, 2003).

***For alcohol and drug using offenders, DUI/Drug Court is more effective at reducing alcohol and drug use than the traditional criminal justice process.***

Much research has established a link between drug use and criminal offending (Broome, et. al, 1995; Merrill, et. al, 1999). One of the central goals of drug courts has been to break this link by addressing the underlying substance abuse problem that often results in illegal behavior. Drug courts draw heavily on research that has evidenced the effectiveness of treatment for addressing substance use and abuse (Broome, et. al, 1995; Merrill, et. al, 1999). Drug courts typically assess the nature of an individual offender’s substance abuse problem and assist the offender in obtaining substance abuse treatment. Most drug courts take a holistic approach to the problem of substance abuse; in addition to treating the substance abuse problem directly, they attempt to address underlying problems that are causally linked to drug and alcohol dependence. Drug courts connect offenders to educational opportunities, counseling services, and other social services that can address underlying problems. Although the ultimate goal

is the elimination of substance dependence, drug court staff typically view achievement of this goal as an incremental process; they hold individuals' accountable for relapses but also praise offenders for achieving sobriety.

In this study, DUI/Drug Court participants in Coconino County evidenced lower rates of alcohol and drug usage than did those in the traditional criminal justice process. What is most noteworthy about this finding is that 95 percent of the urinary analysis tests for DUI/Drug Court participants were negative, compared to 79 percent for the control group, despite the fact that the DUI/Drug Court participants took six times more drug tests. Participants in the focus groups noted that the greater accountability provided by regular drug testing reduced their alcohol and drug usage while in the program. In the focus group, some offenders attributed their reduced alcohol and drug use to a fear of sanctions. Some also noted that drug court participation created an ad hoc support group for achieving sobriety. Some even expressed gratitude at being caught so that their substance abuse problem could be addressed.

Most other studies on drug courts conclude that drug offenders assigned to drug courts are more successful at reducing or stopping drug use while participating in the Drug Court program than are those in the traditional criminal justice process. Both the quantity of drugs used and the frequency of usage is reduced for drug court participants in most jurisdictions studied (Belenko, 2001). Current research suggests that the reasons for these reductions rest on several features of drug courts. The provision of treatment is one important factor, especially when combined with heightened accountability for drug usage via increased drug testing (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998b). Many citizens do not have the resources, knowledge or motivation to seek treatment services; drug courts direct clients to community services, make it seem cost effective for offender's to participate in these services (the alternative – jail or prison - often seems far more costly), and motivate offenders to use these services through a combination of coercion (suspended sentences) and encouragement.

Like other studies (Belenko, 2002), this study found drug use prevalence was lower for participants in the DUI/Drug Court program and for recent graduates than for those processed through the traditional criminal justice system. However, few studies have assessed whether this effect remains over time. It is possible that drug testing and the fear of coercion operate as a temporary deterrent that might disappear once the client exits the program. Although this study cannot address this issue, a few studies have tracked drug court participants over a longer period of time (often up to two years after completion of the program); these research studies suggest that drug court programs have a lasting effect on reduced levels of drug use, though the effect may diminish over time (Belenko, 1998). Importantly, at least one recent study has suggested that drug treatment effects might be cumulative; the more encounters individuals have with drug treatment, the more effective each subsequent exposure to treatment becomes (Merrill, et. al, 1999). This suggests a potential long term benefit of treatment, even if it does not have large immediate effects.



***For alcohol and drug using offenders, DUI/Drug Court is more effective at reducing criminal offending than the traditional criminal justice process.***

Citizens who encounter the traditional criminal justice process and drug courts all have one thing in common; they have committed a criminal offense. A central goal of drug courts, as well as traditional criminal justice processes, is to reduce future criminal offending. Drug courts seek to reduce future crime in several ways. They are premised on the view that much criminal offending is linked to substance abuse. By addressing the substance abuse problem, as well as underlying problems individuals face, it is believed that drug and alcohol offenders will be less like to engage in criminal activity.

The current study found that participants in the DUI/Drug Court did have fewer new offenses than did those in the control group. Three times as many additional offenses were committed each month by those in the control group than by DUI/Drug Court participants, although in both cases the number of new offenses was relatively small. It is important to note that this study cannot address whether this effect will be lasting once participants leave the DUI/Drug Court program.

Previous research on drug courts has consistently found reduced criminal offending to be a significant benefit of drug court participation (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998b; Belenko, 1998). The effect of reduced offending is greatest while actively participating in the drug court. Research has yet to determine conclusively the source of this effect. Drug court researchers have offered several possible explanations for this effect (Belenko, 1999). It may be that individuals are deterred from future offending because of the threat of expulsion from the Drug Court program if re-offending occurs and the corresponding application of jail and/or prison time that would result. Or, it may be that drug treatment and other services reduce drug use, thus reducing offending. It is also possible that greater supervision and contact with drug court participants results in fewer offenses. It may be that it is some combination of these factors that results in lower rates of offending. Future research is needed to clarify this relationship.

***For alcohol and drug using offenders, DUI/Drug Court is more cost effective than the traditional criminal justice process.***

One of the motivations for jurisdictions to create drug courts has been the huge cost associated with the “war on drugs.” The last two decades have seen unparalleled growth in the number of offenders incarcerated for drug offenses (Mauer and Chesney-Lind, 2002). This growth has placed enormous pressure on the criminal justice system in every jurisdiction, but particularly on courts, jails and prisons. Drug courts emerged, in part, as a way to handle the huge influx of drug cases that dominate criminal justice dockets. Treating offenders holds the promise of reducing the number of individuals incarcerated, easing pressure on jails and prisons, and reducing future recidivism.

This study evidences that for this jurisdiction, DUI/Drug Court appears to be a cost effective strategy for handling alcohol and drug offenders. Recognizing that many costs

are difficult to quantify, an accounting of known costs suggests that the average DUI/Drug Court participant in this study costs Coconino County approximately \$6,408 compared with a cost of \$22,740 for drug offenders processed through the traditional criminal justice system. The actual benefits to society are underestimated by these figures, however, since this study also reveals that DUI/Drug Court participants make more positive contributions to society during an average month, working longer hours each week and spending more time in school than alcohol and drug offenders processed through the traditional criminal justice system. These positive benefits do not just affect participants, but also dependents, family members, and other citizens in the community, who often pay a heavy price when offenders are incarcerated. Because the DUI/Drug Court process involves a shorter period of time than the traditional criminal justice process, both the benefits and costs outlined here are cumulative over time.

This finding is consistent with previous research on drug courts that has examined the cost of drug courts relative to traditional criminal justice processing of substance abusing offenders. The vast majority of drug court evaluations have evidenced that drug courts provide a cost effective alternative to the criminal justice process (U.S. Department of Justice, 1998b; Belenko, 1998). Because many drug courts were initially funded with federal government support, some expected that drug courts would fold once the federal government ceased funding these initiatives. Current research suggests that drug courts are likely to have longevity because the research to date has so clearly evidenced that they provide a less expensive way to deal with drug and alcohol offenders than the traditional criminal justice process, both in the short run and in the long run. This is true whether the assessment focuses on reduced criminal justice personnel costs, reduced court time, reduced incarceration or the benefits of increased and more stable employment (which means paying taxes), greater community service, or a more educated citizenry.

## **2. Considerations for the Future**

The findings and analysis reported in this study suggest several broad considerations that criminal justice system and DUI/Drug Court personnel, policy makers, and concerned citizens might want to explore in the future.

***There is a need for more research to answer some of the questions this study only suggests.***

The most important question about the DUI/Drug Court that cannot be answered by this research project is whether the positive impact of drug court participation on offenders will be lasting. Only a study that tracks offenders for a period of time after completion of the program can answer this question. Some recent research has found that the benefits of drug courts are most lasting if adequate after-care services are available and if pre-release planning is part of the drug court process (Belenko, 1999). Additionally, the small sample size of this data set makes it impossible to utilize more sophisticated

methodological tools available to researchers. Future research could address this shortcoming.

***DUI/Drug Court should be encouraged for drug and alcohol using offenders.***

If the DUI/Drug Court is more effective for drug and alcohol offenders than the traditional criminal justice process, it is important to encourage participation in the program. Roughly 30 percent of those eligible for DUI/Drug Court elected to not participate in the program. It is interesting to note that DUI/Drug Court participants were more likely to be married and to have dependants than those who opted out of the drug court. There may be a greater incentive to participate in drug court for offenders who are concerned about the effect of their behavior on intimates and dependants. Additionally, those participating tended to have less prior exposure to treatment. Those who opted out may be discouraged from participating in DUI/Drug Court because of previous treatment failures. However, research by Merrill et. al, (1999) indicates that past treatment failure does not necessarily determine future treatment outcomes since the impact of treatment may be cumulative. Offenders may be more likely to participate in the DUI/Drug Court program if they are educated about the value of continued exposure to treatment. It is important for future research to explore in greater detail the reasons people choose to opt out and ways to encourage participation. At least one study that explored this question found that one important reason for offenders to opt out of drug court was that they did not have access to a car, making transportation a problem (Logan, et. al, 2000). More in-depth research on those who did not participate might provide useful information about how to make drug court more attractive to a broader clientele.

***Drug treatment and addressing underlying problems faced by offenders may reduce crime.***

If providing drug treatment and addressing underlying problems faced by offenders can reduce criminal offending for participants in drug court, it makes sense for communities to ensure that these resources are widely available to all citizens as a crime prevention strategy. The criminal justice system is a costly way for social problems to be addressed, regardless of how individuals are processed. If research on drug courts suggests that substance abuse problems and social problems such as a lack of educational opportunity are linked to criminal offending, it makes sense for communities to consider investing in these services for all citizens, rather than waiting until a crime has occurred.

***Alternative justice processing may benefit other offenders and reduce the cost of crime.***

A vast body of social science research supports the conclusion that alternative approaches to incarceration hold the greatest hope for reducing crime and increasing public safety (Mauer and Chesney-Lind, 2002). If alternative justice processing reduces drug use, criminal offending, and provides a cost effective strategy for handling drug and alcohol offenders in Coconino County, it is reasonable to consider alternative justice processing for other kinds of offending. In fact, jurisdictions around the country are developing a variety of alternative courts that borrow from the drug court example. Some jurisdictions have developed specialized courts for domestic violence, and juvenile justice (including juvenile drug courts). Others have developed “community courts.” All of these alternative models are designed to take a holistic approach to the problem of criminal offending. The objective is to assess broader problems that confront individual offenders and to utilize the court as a vehicle for linking offenders to social and community services. The ultimate goal is to reduce criminal offending as well as to reduce social problems that often underlie illegal behavior.

***Positive, encouraging, personal contact with criminal justice officials may increase compliance as well as positive attitudes toward the justice system for some offenders.***

Data from the process evaluation suggest that DUI/Drug Court participants valued the increased contact they had with judges, probation officers, and other staff members in the DUI/Drug Court; they also valued the encouragement offered by those working within the DUI/Drug Court, particularly the presiding judge. In general, they believed that a supportive approach to sobriety and compliance with the law encouraged them to succeed. This approach could be extended to other adjudicatory and justice processes to see if greater personal contact and a more supportive and concerned approach enhances compliance with the law. Given limited court resources, it may be valuable to target this approach to those offenders whom would benefit most. For example, at least one research project found that the frequency of judicial status hearings in a drug court benefited some offenders, particularly those with a history of substance abuse treatment and those with antisocial personality disorder, more than others (Festinger, et. al, 2002); they suggest targeting frequent status hearings to these offenders as a cost maximizing strategy.

***Evaluation research is a useful strategy for gauging program outcomes and the effect of justice processes on participants.***

The Office of Justice Programs (2003) and other drug court researchers (Belenko, 2002) strongly recommend that all courts develop comprehensive management information systems to regularize data collection so that it is gathered continuously as a regular part of court operations. It is also recommended that courts establish

researcher-policymaker partnerships as a strategy to evaluate current initiatives and operations in order to improve court processes and to utilize scarce resources with greater efficiency. The collaborative relationship that has developed between Northern Arizona University's Social Research Laboratory and the Coconino County Court highlights the value of such partnerships.

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***APPENDIX A***

***DATA COLLECTION FORMS***